

# Dearne Way

The Dearne Way is made up of eight short walks joined to form a continuous footpath some 30 miles (48 km) in length, mainly through the Metropolitan Borough of Barnsley, but also in part in Kirklees, Wakefield and Doncaster.

This leaflet is one of a series of four, designed not only to show you the route, but also to point out and explain many of the interesting facts and features to be discovered along the way.

**Further information**  
If you have any comments regarding the walk, or encounter any difficulties en route, please do not hesitate to contact:  
Rights of Way Team,  
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, PO Box 601,  
Barnsley S70 9FA  
Telephone 01226 773555  
Email publicrightsofway@barnsley.gov.uk

Information on the sections of the walk in the Kirklees area is available from Denby Dale Countryside Project.  
Telephone 01484 222960

Information on bus and train services is available on 0113 245 7676.  
www.metrojourneyplanner.info

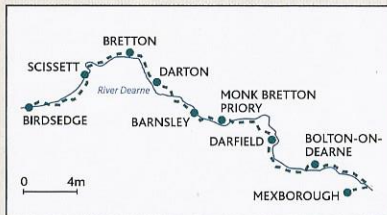
OS Explorer maps nos. 278 and 288 cover the area

The young River Dearne flowing through New House Wood

**Acknowledgements**  
Designed by FDA Design Ltd  
Illustrations by Geoff Carr, Dan Powell and Anna Sutton  
Photographs by Phil Butcher, Brian Elliott, Peter Farmer and Laurie Ramsay

Supported by Barnsley Local Access Forum

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM  
BARNSELEY



The Dearne Way follows as closely as possible the valley of the River Dearne from its source near Birdseye, Denby Dale, to its meeting with the River Don at Mexborough. You will see for yourself that the valley is rich in wildlife, thriving in a landscape shaped and changed by human toil and industry over thousands of years.



## Waymarked Walk No. 1

# Birdseye to Scissett

**Starting point**  
Penistone Road (A629),  
Birdseye

**Distance**  
4 1/2 miles (7.2 km)

**Time**  
Allow yourself up to four hours  
for exploring at a leisurely pace

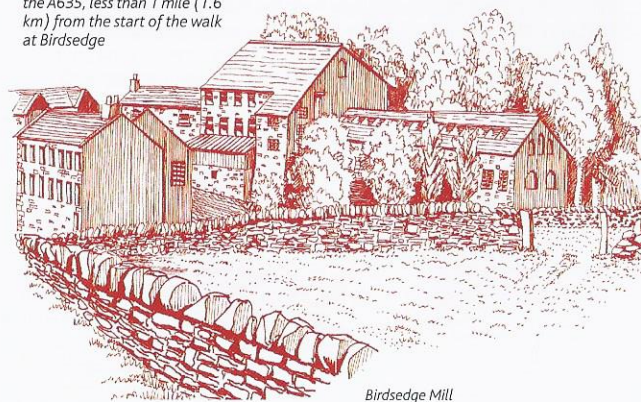
**Footwear**  
Some sections can have wet,  
muddy or uneven ground.  
Stout shoes are recommended

**Waymarks**  
The route is waymarked with a  
miner's lamp symbol

**How to get there**  
By Bus: Birdseye is served by  
a bus route which connects  
Huddersfield to Sheffield via  
Penistone. A frequent bus  
service connects Barnsley  
to Penistone. There are  
connections from Scissett,  
Clayton West and West Bretton  
back to Barnsley

By Train: Denby Dale station  
sits on the Sheffield-Barnsley-  
Huddersfield line

By Car: From either Scissett,  
Clayton West or West Bretton  
there is a bus service back to  
the junction of the A629 and  
the A635, less than 1 mile (1.6  
km) from the start of the walk  
at Birdseye



## Men and women of the cloth

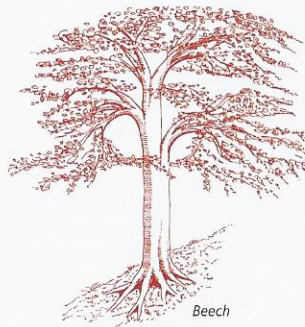
On cold, dark winter's days with scarce enough light to penetrate the gloom, the gentle purr and creak of a spinning wheel mocks the silence of the women as they spin and spin the soft woollen fibres into yarn. Across the bedroom floor, father and son deftly weave the yarn on a simple loom.



And so for maybe 300 years, up to the 17th century, this scene would be played out in the numerous farmhouses scattered about these upper reaches of the River Dearne.

But then the clothiers took control, entrepreneurs who would farm out different stages of the weaving process to different families. One might spin, another weave; then the master fullers, bleachers and dyers would finish the cloth; and the clothier would sell.

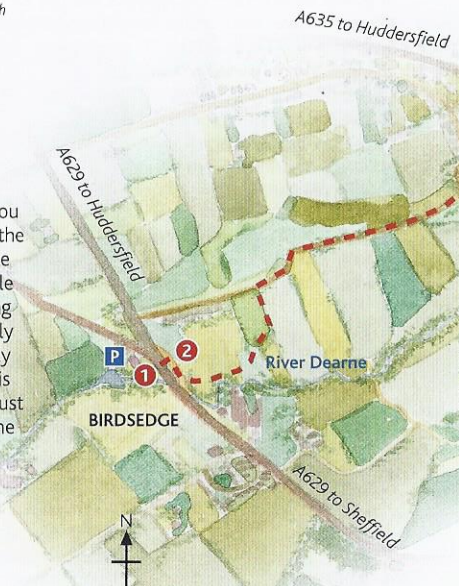
Steam and coal. They changed everything from the early 1800s on. The waters of the River Dearne and the discovery of vast reserves of coal were to ensure that the villages of Denby Dale, Scissett and Clayton West would grow to become a part of the centre of the world's textile industry here in West Yorkshire. With each improvement in the efficiency of machines, the traditional spinners' and weavers' crafts died – but the finest worsteds live on!



The growth of the smooth-barked sycamore and beech trees suggests that Stephen Wood has been felled and planted with these trees early this century. Sycamore was a valuable and widely planted tree for use as rollers in the textile mills – but not any more of course. The lower section of the wood is a nature reserve and is managed by the Upper Dearne Woodlands Conservation Group. The reserve has nuthatch and pied flycatcher as important species.

The route starts by the prominent building on your right and the trickle of water that flows into the mill dam, the infant River Dearne. Along the Dearne Valley, the river has encouraged industries – and this one is the nearest to the river's source which lies just a stone's-throw away.

Before you set off you might well ponder what the scenery looked like some 2-3000 years ago. People lived around here as long ago as that, and probably even longer, but the only hard evidence we have is an Iron Age earthwork just 1/2 mile due south on the hilltop.



Park Lane, Upper Cumberworth



5 Toby Wood, here on the right, harbours a secret that Denby Dale I'm sure, would rather forget. The village is famous for its 'monster pies' which have usually been made to celebrate an event of national importance. On 27th August 1887 a pie was baked for the Jubilee of Queen Victoria. Unfortunately the pie, having stood for some days in hot weather, was quite inedible and was carted off for burial up here in the woods! Undeterred, the time-honoured baking of a special pie to celebrate an event of national importance has continued.

In Affectionate Remembrance of  
THE  
DENBY DALE PIE,  
WHO DIED AUGUST 27th, 1887,  
Aged Three Days,  
And was interred in Quicklime, with much rejoicing, in  
Toby Wood, Sunday, August 28th, 1887.  
With the Committee's regrets.  
Strong, strong was the smell that compelled us to part,  
From a treat to our stomachs and a snare to our heart;  
But a jubilee pie with so "monger" a tale,  
Was not a success—hence its quickly buried state.  
We smell thee when the morning dawns,  
We smell thee when the night returns,  
We smell thee here, we smell thee there,  
Thy scent is present everywhere.

Denby Dale Pie 1887, in memorandum



6 Two hundred years ago Denby Dale was hardly worth putting on the map. The clues to its growth are just waiting to be seen over the wall. For centuries the hill villages and farmsteads were handling and making their own fleeces, yarns and cloths. Then suddenly around the 1850s dams were being built on the River Dearne as the weaving industry became concentrated into factory systems installed with steam-driven machinery. But of course what dominates the scene is the beautiful stone viaduct which spans the valley. The railways opened up an enormous market for selling the products of the valley and so the factory system and the railways developed together.



Denby Dale Viaduct

8 A quaint, though somewhat shuddering, reminder of that medieval age before the factories arrived, lies here in the name 'Cuckstool Road'. Here you would be expected to prove your innocence of witchcraft by suffering the horror of the ducking-stool – and only the guilty would survive it.

7 As a result of the 1964 Denby Dale Pie (to celebrate the four Royal births), a new community hall, the Pie Hall, was built. You will recognise it, for on the forecourt is a flower-bed – set in the dish of that famous pie.



11 Before descending Lower Common Lane, look out onto the valley below. The Norton's mills in the valley bottom stretch the length of Scissett; the green fields, behind the church, where once stood Great Scissett Wood; and the majestic concrete pillar which soars upward over 1000 ft above Emley Moor – the TV mast.

10 Leaving the small irregular, walled fields behind, the more elegant and spacious grounds of Bagden Hall appear. The first buildings were built in the 17th century, and are known as Bagden Hall Farm. Joseph Norton, the son of a small-time clothier, and his brother George, were the heirs apparent. It was they who owned the land. It was they, in the early 1800s, who bought mills and used water power to drive machines to supply weavers in the surrounding villages with yarn. It was they who later brought the weavers to the mills by providing purpose-built cottages. And it was they who, once elevated from manufacturers to gentlemen, quitted their mill house and built Nortonthorpe Hall (Joseph) and Bagden Hall (George); identical houses built in the 1830s. From here they could view all their work.

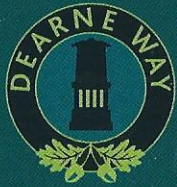


Bagden Hall

4 On entering New Park, a pasture woodland of widely-spaced mature oak trees, turn half-right up the slope to a track just below the top. Keep left past Wood Farm and downhill to the A635.

9 In medieval times farmers felled areas of woodland to increase their grazing or croplands. Small fields with odd shapes were the result and if the land was for grazing then very often the tree stubs, or stumps, would be left behind. Stubbin House and Stubbin Lane tell us the origin of these fields. The next strip of woodland you pass through probably formed a part of a great woodland which may have existed as late as the 14th century.





## Waymarked Walk No. 2

# Scissett to Bretton

**Starting point**  
Scissett Swimming Baths,  
Spring Grove, Scissett

**Distance**  
4 miles (6.4 km)

**Time**  
Allow yourself up to 4 hours  
for exploring at a leisurely  
pace

**Footwear**  
Some sections can have wet,  
muddy or uneven ground.  
Stout shoes are recommended

**Waymarks**  
The route is waymarked with a  
miner's lamp symbol

**How to get there**  
By Bus: There are frequent  
bus services to Scissett from  
the surrounding urban areas  
of Barnsley, Wakefield,  
Huddersfield and Leeds. From  
Bretton Country Park or West  
Bretton there are similar  
services to get you back home

By Car: Please park  
considerately. There are bus  
services from West Bretton to  
take you back to your car in  
Scissett

### Can't see the wood for the trees

Great Scissett Wood was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, covering a vast area just to the north of Scissett village. Some trees would be allowed to grow for 100 years or more; others might be cut down to ground level, to find them springing up again to yield a continuous harvest of wood every 10-20 years, providing small timber for fencing, tool handles, looms and charcoal for the local iron industries.

Most of Great Scissett Wood had disappeared by the 16th century to provide pasture for the nearby growing villages. The remaining fragments (High Bridge Wood and Blacker Wood) have been planted with sycamore, oak and beech and now conjure up little of the flavour of our vision of the ancient 'wildwood'.



### Bretton Hall

Few Yorkshire families have rivalled the vast wealth and landholdings of the Wentworths, whose different branches owned estates at Wentworth Woodhouse, Stainborough, Woolley and West Bretton. It was Sir William who erected the present Bretton Hall in 1720 after first demolishing the old Tudor one – but without damaging its reputation as a hostelry for passing royalty (Henry VIII once slept there!).

This has all changed and Bretton Hall was once a satellite campus for the University of Leeds, the estate grounds hosting the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Bretton Country Park and Bretton Lakes Nature Reserve.

1 The River Dearne brought the textiles, and the textiles brought the roads and railways. In the early 1800s the local entrepreneurs in the cloth trade desperately wanted better access to Tammy Hall – a cloth hall in Wakefield, where the 'wheeler dealing' took place. They got it in the form of a turnpike road in 1842 between Denby Dale and Wakefield (A636). The detested surveyor of highways could compel every household to work six days per year on the repair of minor roads, while the money needed for the upkeep of turnpikes was raised by tolls.

2 'They generally live upon porridge and potatoes, and they do not know what it is, many of them. . . to taste fresh meat from year's end to year's end. . . But as to their clothing; they are clothed in rags; and their furniture is such as I am sure I cannot describe, but such as a convict ought not to have.' These were the typical conditions of weavers described in a report on working class conditions in 1834. At that time there were six textile businesses operating in Clayton West.



Local collier lads c.1900 (Brian Elliott)

3 'Collier lads gets gowd and silver; factory lads get nowt but brass.' There are few other places in the Dearne Valley where such sentiments might run high, except maybe in Barnsley where the linen weavers and colliers shared the same streets. Around Park Mill the now abandoned collieries and factories developed together from the mid-1800s. The social and economic status of the collier was always higher.

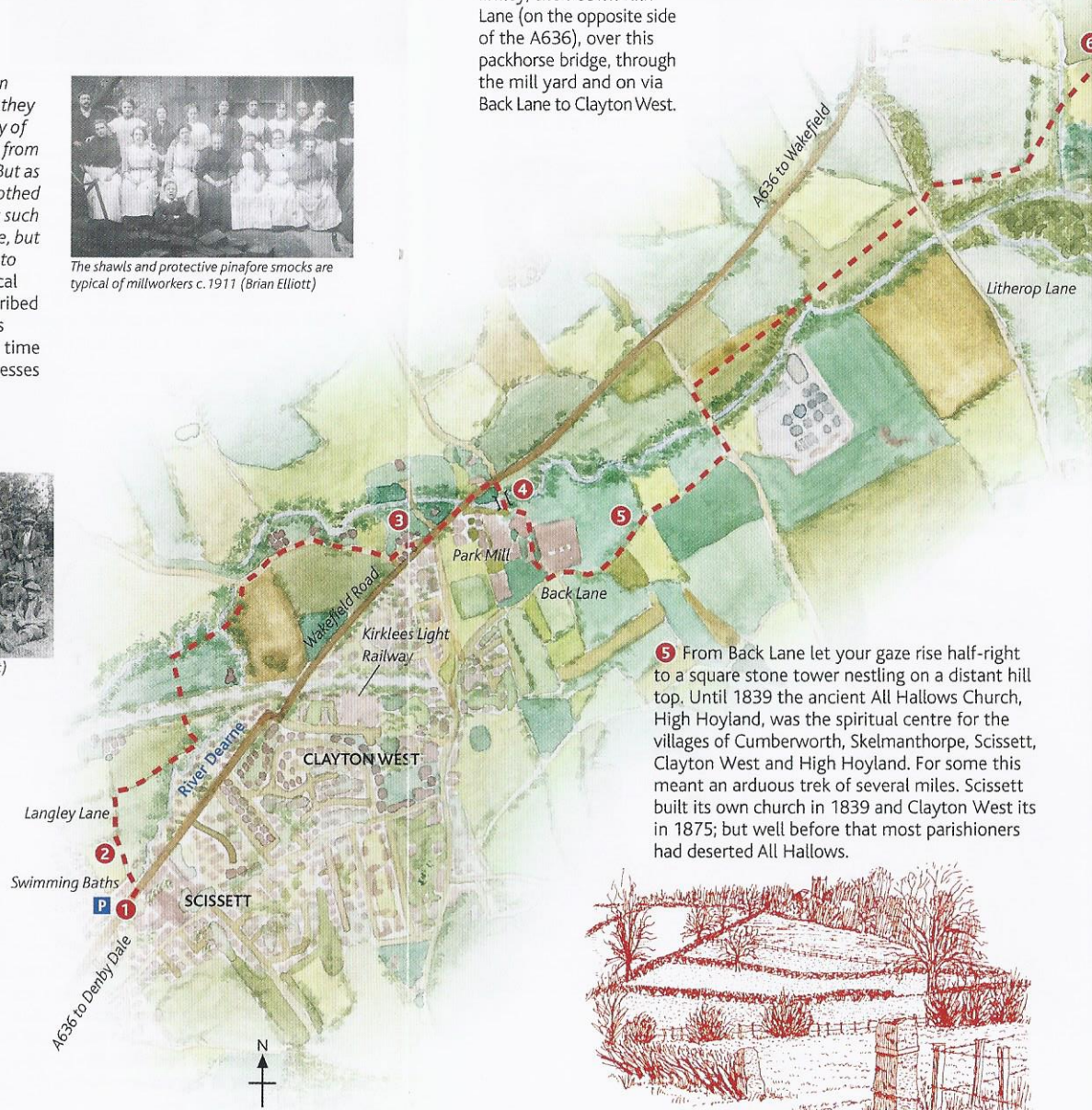


The shawls and protective pinafore smocks are typical of millworkers c.1911 (Brian Elliott)

4 By walking over this bridge you are carrying on an age-old tradition dating back at least to the 1400s. Until the turnpike road was built, the road from Wakefield came via Crigglestone, Bretton, Woodhouse Farm and Emley, then down Kiln Lane (on the opposite side of the A636), over this packhorse bridge, through the mill yard and on via Back Lane to Clayton West.



Packhorse bridge



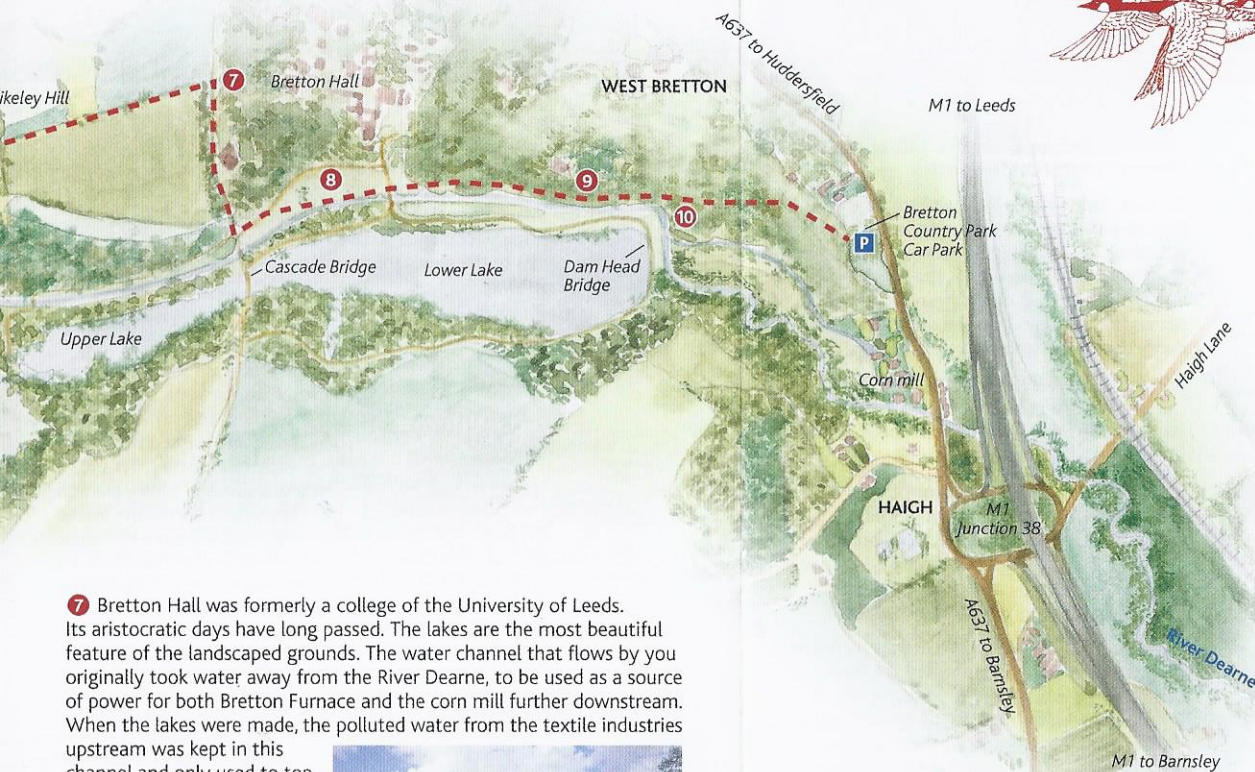
5 From Back Lane let your gaze rise half-right to a square stone tower nestling on a distant hill top. Until 1839 the ancient All Hallows Church, High Hoyland, was the spiritual centre for the villages of Cumberworth, Skelmanthorpe, Scissett, Clayton West and High Hoyland. For some this meant an arduous trek of several miles. Scissett built its own church in 1839 and Clayton West its in 1875; but well before that most parishioners had deserted All Hallows.



All Hallows, High Hoyland



**6** On Pikeley Hill, enjoy a stunning view of the surrounding countryside and over much of the grounds of Bretton Hall. To the south, beyond Bridge Royd Wood, lie the Upper and Lower Lakes, built as part of the landscaping of the vast grounds by Sir Thomas Wentworth towards the end of the 18th century.



**7** Bretton Hall was formerly a college of the University of Leeds. Its aristocratic days have long passed. The lakes are the most beautiful feature of the landscaped grounds. The water channel that flows by you originally took water away from the River Dearne, to be used as a source of power for both Bretton Furnace and the corn mill further downstream. When the lakes were made, the polluted water from the textile industries upstream was kept in this channel and only used to top up the lakes during periods of low pollution levels. The lakes now support large numbers of wildfowl and aquatic plants.

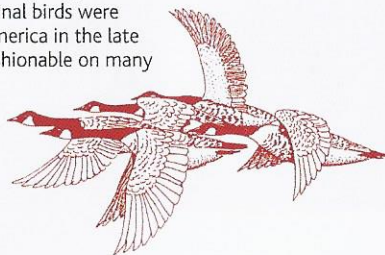


Looking towards Bretton Hall from Cascade Bridge

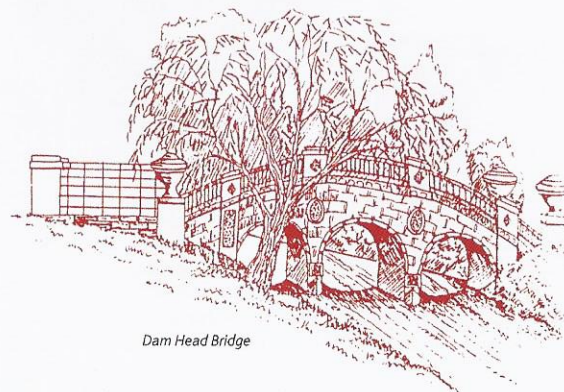


**8** You may notice some strange figures amongst the trees in the park. Some of them may move. The Yorkshire Sculpture Park was opened in 1977 for the public to enjoy modern British sculpture away from the formal settings of museums and galleries. Two of the country's most influential sculptors, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, who were born in this district, have sculptures here.

**9** The Park is a feeding area for a large number of Canada geese. The original birds were introduced from North America in the late 17th century. This was fashionable on many estates at that time.



**10** The ornate bridge here gives access to the woodlands of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve, to other walks along public rights of way and to a part of the Sculpture Park on the south side of the lakes. Information about Bretton Country Park, the Nature Reserve and Yorkshire Sculpture Park is available at the visitor centre adjacent to the car park.



Dam Head Bridge



Waymarked Walks

**Birdsedge to  
Bretton**

